



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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Arizona Early Child Development and Health Board Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council MINUTES

Welcome and Roll Call of Regional Council

A Regular Meeting of the FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council was held on December 9, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was located at the Navajo Nation Museum, Conference Room #2, Loop Road and Highway 264, Window Rock, Arizona 86515.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Martin at approximately 10:07 a.m. followed by roll call of the Regional Council.

Members Present: Benjamin Barney, Amelia Black, Valonia Hardy, Harry Martin, Rhonda Etsitty, and Dawn Yazzie; Paula Seanez and Victoria Begay attended telephonically

Members Absent: Grace Boyne

FTF Staff Present: Melissa Begay, Elyse Dempsey, Jeanne Martin, Maria Soto, Memarie Tsosie and Virginia Turner

Call to the Public

There were no calls to public at this time.

Discussion and Possible Approval of November 5, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Member Black that the Regional Council approve the November 5, 2014 Special Meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Member Barney. Motion carried.

Conflict of Interest: Council Members will Address Potential Conflicts of Interest Regarding Items on this Agenda

Chair Martin disclosed conflict with Agenda Item #5: Review, Discussion and Possible Approval of the Quality First SFY2016 Allotments. Chair Martin is employed by Kayenta Unified School District, which is a grant recipient of Quality First Scholarships.

Member Etsitty disclosed conflict with Agenda Item #5: Review, Discussion and Possible Approval of the Quality First SFY2016 Allotments. Member Etsitty is employed by Association for Supportive Child Care, which is a sub-grantee recipient of Quality First; and with Agenda Item #7: Presentation and Possible Action on STAR School's Preschool. Member Etsitty is employed by Association for Supportive Child Care, which is a partner with Quality First grant recipient, Valley of the Sun United Way.

Review, Discussion and Possible Approval of the Quality First SFY2016 Allotments

With two of seven present Regional Council members having conflict with this agenda item, the Regional Council elected to proceed to Agenda Item 6 until Member Seanez entered the meeting via telephone.

Chair Martin and Member Etsitty recused themselves from discussion and action for this agenda item.

Member Black chaired the meeting for this agenda item given the conflict previously stated by Chair Martin.

Regional Director Begay indicated that the Quality First and Quality First Scholarships strategies were initially presented to the Regional Council in October 2014, in which discussion and action by the Regional Council occurred. However, due to miscalculation by the Quality First tool, the strategies' allotments that were presented in October had not accounted for centers that are currently pending selection, currently enrolled, and vacant slots. Regional Director Begay asked that the Regional Council review and take action on the updated strategy allotments for Quality First and Quality First Scholarships.

a. Quality First

Regional Director Begay specified that the cost for coaching and incentive has been reduced, and that the target services units remain at 25 centers.

A motion was made by Member Hardy that the Regional Partnership Council approve the Quality First Strategy package for 25 Center Based Providers with a funding allotment of \$463,218 in State Fiscal Year 2016. The Quality First package includes the following strategies for enrolled providers: Quality First Coaching and Incentives, Quality First Academy and Quality First Specialized Technical Assistance, seconded by Member Barney. Motion carried.

b. Quality First Scholarships

Regional Director Begay specified that the allotment has been reduced as well as the target services units.

A motion was made by Member Yazzie that the Regional Partnership Council approve the Quality First Child Care Scholarship Strategy with a total allotment of \$1,718,933 for an estimate of 164 Quality First Scholarships for 18 Center Based Providers enrolled in Quality First; an additional 67 Quality First Scholarships for children birth to age five in the following zip codes 86033, 86031, 86510, 87328, 86503, and 86504; and 75 scholarships for children of Navajo college students temporarily living off the Navajo Nation in State Fiscal Year 2016, seconded by Member Barney. Motion carried.

Presentation, Discussion and Possible Approval of SFY2016 Scopes of Work and Target Populations

Regional Director Begay presented the scope of work for two new proposed strategies for SFY2016-2018: the Professional Development for Early Care and Education Professionals Strategy, and the Mental Health Consultation Strategy.

a. Professional Development for Early Care and Education Professionals

In line with the Regional Council's efforts to increase the number of highly trained and skilled early childhood professionals in the region, the Professional Development for Early Care and Education Professionals strategy will provide a series of learning seminars throughout the entire Navajo Nation region to early care professionals to enhance and support the educational, social-emotional development and health care for all young children. In addition, the strategy, offering college course credit, would also create an opportunity for early care professionals to advance in their educational milestones, and establishing regular communication between the perspective grantee of the strategy and regional higher education institutions. The strategy will be released through a Request for Grant Application.

Member Barney asked for clarification regarding college course credit earned by early care professionals who would attend the learning seminars. Regional Director Begay specified that the learning series would provide early care professionals with classroom experience, and engage professionals that could use earned course credit to advance their educational milestones.

Member Yazzie noted the Professional Development for Early Care and Education Professionals strategy would address the limited early care professional trainings within the region for professionals who might not have prior knowledge in early childhood health and development.

Member Black asked if implementation of the strategy would also contain components outlined in Navajo Nation tribal proclamation, which requires inclusion of the Navajo language and cultural components in early care curriculum. Regional Director Begay noted that inclusion of a Navajo language component in the grant application is possible, and that additional efforts to incorporate the Navajo language in early care settings in the region are being addressed by Regional Council through the Navajo Language Preservation strategy, which continues to be developed.

A motion was made by Member Yazzie that the Regional Partnership Council approve the scope of work for the SFY2016 Professional Development for Early Care and Education Professionals' strategy, seconded by Member Hardy. Motion carried.

Chair Martin confirmed that Member Seanez joined the meeting via telephone at approximately 10:36 a.m. Furthermore, Chair Martin reconfirmed conflicts by himself and Member Etsitty with Agenda Item 5: Review, Discussion and Possible Approval of the Quality First SFY2016, and redirected the Regional Council to Agenda Item 5 since quorum could be established by Member Seanez.

b. Mental Health Consultation

Regarding the Mental Health Consultation Strategy, Regional Director Begay explained that implementation of the strategy would address a regional need for mental health consultants to assist early childcare professionals in the healthy care of the social-emotional development of young children across the Navajo Nation region. The target population will be Quality First centers. The strategy is a multiregional strategy that is being implemented by other Regional Councils, and has an administrative home identified.

Member Etsitty inquired of other Regional Partnership Councils that are implementing the strategy. Virginia Turner, Senior Regional Director for the First Things First Northeast region, indicated that within the FTF Northeast region, the Yavapai Regional Council is the only region currently implementing the strategy.

Chair Martin asked about implementation in the Navajo Nation region specifically. Ms. Turner noted the eight Quality First center based providers would receive mental health consultation services through an entity that the administrative home would sub-contract for region.

Member Yazzie asked if implementation of the strategy also includes support to families that would assist their child's social-emotional development within a classroom. Ms. Turner confirmed that implementation would include such.

A motion was made by Member Etsitty that the Regional Partnership Council approve the scope of work for the SFY2016 Mental Health Consultation strategy, seconded by Member Black. Motion carried.

Presentation and Possible Action on STAR School's Preschool

Regional Director Begay reported interest by the STAR School, located in the FTF Coconino regional area, to enroll in Quality First. Recent discussion with Dr. Mark Sorensen, President of the STAR School, and Ellen Majure, Regional Director of the FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council, highlighted the highly served number of Navajo children from Leupp, Arizona. Regional Director Begay reminded the Regional Council that seven Quality First slots are currently vacant, and asked for consideration of the enrollment of the STAR School into Quality First.

Dr. Sorensen and LouAnn Johnson, Navajo Language Teacher at the STAR School, presented information regarding the school's preschool program, which was created to better prepare children entering the school's kindergarten program. The preschool program operates a Montessori-based and culturally-informed curriculum that is also evidence-based, and majority enrollment of students are Navajo. Dr. Sorensen noted that the unique structure of the school has been an asset to the local communities, and to other schools, which have received Montessori training.

Ms. Johnson shared classroom curriculum components that surround Navajo language and culture components. Students come from Leupp, Tolani Lake, Bird Springs, and Flagstaff, Arizona.

Chair Martin asked where students continue after STAR School, and if inquiry has been made to the FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council for enrollment in Quality First. Dr. Sorensen noted that most students attend STAR School through 8th grade and eventually go to school in Leupp, Winslow, and Flagstaff, Arizona; and that the STAR School is currently on a waiting list for Quality First for the FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council.

Chair Martin inquired of the possibility to fund STAR School despite being out of the Navajo Nation regional area; and if any adjustments that would be required for the SFY2016 Funding Plan. Virginia Turner, Senior Regional Director for the First Things First Northeast Region, confirmed that the FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council is able to fund STAR School, and further noted that STAR School is on a waiting list for the FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council, which currently does not have additional funding for additional Quality First slots. Regional Director Begay confirmed that no adjustments to the SFY2016 Funding Plan would be required considering that there are seven vacant slots for Quality First.

Member Barney asked for clarifications regarding selection of the STAR School and of board elections/regulations. Dr. Sorensen confirmed that STAR School is a public charter school, which has the ability to create the school philosophy and education system. Dr. Sorensen also noted that the school board members are appointed and consist of majority Navajo members.

Member Black expressed appreciation for the Montessori model, and the evidence-based practices.

Chair Martin requested for clarification regarding the number of Quality First Scholarships for the Star School. Regional Director Begay clarified that the school will be assessed and offered a number of scholarships based on the star-rating; upon which the Regional Council may elect to fund additional scholarships. Regional Director Begay noted that 24 students are currently enrolled in the preschool program.

Ms. Turner informed the Regional Council that if funding is approved by the Regional Council for STAR School then the Coconino Regional Partnership Council will be informed in January and take action to affirm that STAR School will be receiving funding from the Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council. Therefore, funding will not be made available to STAR School until late January 2015 after the Regular Meeting of the Coconino Regional Partnership Council.

A motion was made by Member Barney that the Regional Partnership Council approve funding for the Quality First Package for one center and Quality First Scholarships in SFY2015. The Regional Council understands this funding will support the enrollment of STAR School into Quality First, and that STAR School is physically located in the Coconino Regional area, seconded by Member Yazzie. Motion carried.

Program Update from Navajo Nation Regional Grantees

- a. Cheryl Yazzie, Program Manager of the Navajo County Public Health Service District (NCPHSD), shared a PowerPoint presentation for the Nutrition/Obesity/Physical Activity program including quarterly data for parent trainings, current training curricula, and future programming approaches. Specifically, Ms. Yazzie reported that curricula for Arizona Department of Health Services EMPOWER Pack; Choose My Plate; SPARKS physical activity; Health Store Initiative; Nutritious Health Story Time; and garden education are used for trainings, and further reported consideration of three approaches – policy, systems, and environmental change – for future programs. Community partners currently include schools with preschool programs, local grocery stores, and community organizations. Ms. Yazzie noted that gratitude has been expressed by adults/parents and community members that have taken trainings.

Member Barney commented that similar programs have been implemented in the region, but have not sustained momentum towards healthy lifestyles. Ms. Yazzie reported that the curricula are evidence-based and that unique to NCPHSD's implementation of the health initiative programs is maintenance of relationships to providers and parents as a constant resource so that programs are sustained.

Member Hardy inquired about the rate of parent involvement, and assessments of child and parent health from beginning to end of training sessions. Ms. Yazzie noted that families are recruited based on interest and willingness to complete the entire program of eight sessions.

- b. Claude Endfield, Faculty at Northland Pioneer College, provided progress and success of individuals enrolled in the NPC early childhood programs reporting that seventy-nine individuals have received their Child Development Associate since partnering with the FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council, and presented Child Development Associate pins to 10 individuals.

Community Outreach Report

Memarie Tsosie, Community Outreach Coordinator, provided the Quarter 1 community outreach report to the Regional Council, noting fifty-eight community outreach activities that included site tours of local preschool programs, presentations, events, one-on-ones, and speaker trainings. Ms. Tsosie reported that over 3,000 people have heard about FTF through outreach events since July 2014, and that FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council has received 6 media hits. Ms. Tsosie also expressed gratitude to FTF and the Regional Council to serve as the community outreach coordinator.

Future Agenda Items and Announcements

Member Black announced that Diné College applied for a radio station, 92.1 AM, and will be broadcasting soon.

Chair Martin announced that the next FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council will be on January 13, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. in Window Rock, Arizona.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Member Black to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Hardy. Motion carried. Chair Martin adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:16 p.m.


Dated this 10th day of December, 2014

ARIZONA EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH BOARD

Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council



Elyse V. Dempsey, Administrative Assistant II



Grace Boyne, Vice Chair